

Animal Health Safeguarding Review Implementation Progress Report July/August 2004

I. Progress achieved in implementing the review:

Surveillance

- Animal identification –On July 19th, APHIS announced the selection of an interim premises registration system that will record locations where animals reside or will reside. USDA will provide this system and states or tribes can elect to use this system or another system as long as the other system meets national data standards. APHIS has begun evaluating individual state systems. On August 5th, USDA awarded \$11.64 million to states and tribes for use in advancing the national animal identification initiative. Funds awarded by APHIS will be used to register premises, establish data transfer procedures, and conduct field trials or research designed to test and fine-tune ID technologies. Safeguarding Review recommendation #128 calls for the development of a comprehensive animal identification system which takes into consideration state and regional animal production methods.
- Interactive mapping of disease data made available – In July, VS launched an interactive, internet mapping site highlighting equine infectious anemia test data. The website allows users to display a national map with information about the number of horses tested for EIA, the number of test-positive horses, the percentage positive, or a reactor rate. The user can customize the map by selecting a data set and zooming in to a state or region. The EIA interactive mapping site is available at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahps/equine/eia>. Internet mapping services provide a vehicle for sharing of surveillance information as called for in Safeguarding Review recommendation #6.
- Surveillance planning meetings held – In August, the National Surveillance Steering Committee met to continue work on a strategic plan for national surveillance and to prioritize surveillance activities. A planning workshop was also held in August to continue the development of a national surveillance plan for classical swine fever (CSF). VS staff members were joined at the CSF planning workshop by representatives from the National Pork Board, the National Pork Producers Council, the American Association of Swine Veterinarians, and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians. Safeguarding Review recommendation #2 calls for the use of a steering committee to provide guidance for the national surveillance system. Safeguarding review recommendation #6 calls for ensuring that surveillance meets stakeholder needs.

Response

- New Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security – The APHIS Management Team has announced the creation of a new Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security within APHIS. This new office will ensure that APHIS has in place the infrastructure and contingency plans needed to address future emergencies. The new office will also formalize the process by which APHIS employees will be assigned to lend their expertise and service to future emergency programs. Creation of this new office addresses a number of Safeguarding Review recommendations regarding improved coordination and communications within APHIS regarding emergencies (#s 125, 133, 140, and 143).
- Continued collaboration on emergency management at the state level – VS Area Office personnel continue to work with their state counterparts on improving emergency response capabilities. Recent activities include participating in the Pennsylvania State Animal Response Team Steering Committee, training Florida state animal health personnel in the use of the Emergency Management System, and coordinating Incident Command Training in Minnesota. Safeguarding Review recommendation #142 calls for enhancing communication and working relationships between Area and State offices.

Laboratory Systems

- NAHLN Coordinator selected – Barbara Martin has been selected as the APHIS National Animal Health Laboratory Network Coordinator effective August 9th. The coordinator oversees the continued development of the NAHLN. Safeguarding Review recommendations 17, 74, 118, and 121 point toward the establishment of a national animal health laboratory system.

Information Technology

- GIS developments – The APHIS Coordinating Office on Technology, Information, and Assessment (COTIA) sponsored an APHIS-wide GIS strategic planning session the week of August 30th. In addition, a QuickPlace website has been developed to serve as a repository for GIS information within APHIS. Along with serving as a tool for discussion and communication about GIS in APHIS, the QuickPlace also provides a repository of map documents along with links to specialized applications. Safeguarding Review recommendation #129 called for expansion in GIS capabilities.
- Participation at national symposium – VS personnel participated in the National Electronic Veterinary Surveillance Symposium held in July. The symposium was hosted by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and was attended by State Veterinarians and others concerned with electronic monitoring, reporting, and emergency management. Several Safeguarding Review recommendations encourage the use of new technologies (#s 3, 64, and 77).

II. Implementation activities:

The Exclusion Issue Group met the week of August 23rd to continue work on action plans. The Exclusion Issue Group will be conducting a number of site visits at VS ports and with international organizations during August and September to gather input for action plan development.

The Information Technology Issue Group is tentatively scheduled to hold a meeting at the end of September to continue working on action plans.

Comments and questions regarding this report can be directed to Carol Tuszynski at Area Code (970) 494-7320.

